

The 14th RPC Meeting

Report

(Istanbul, 4-6 December, 2003)

1. The 14th meeting of the Regional Planning Council (RPC) of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) was held on December 4 – 6, 2003, at Istanbul, Turkey, preceded by preparatory/review meetings on December 4 - 5, 2003, at Istanbul. The delegates from the Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan, the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the Republic of Tajikistan, the Republic of Turkey, the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Acting Secretary General of ECO with relevant ECO staff attended the meeting. The representatives of the Turkish Muslim Community of Cyprus and the Executive Director of ECI also participated in the meeting. The list of participants is placed at **Annex-I**.

Agenda Item No. 1

INAUGURATION OF THE MEETING

a) Inaugural statement of the high dignitary from Turkey.

2. The meeting was inaugurated by H.E. Associated Professor Dr. Abdullatif Şener, Minister of State and Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Turkey. A copy of his inaugural speech is placed at **Annex-II**.

b) Statement of the Acting Secretary General.

3. Acting Secretary General Mr. Sanaullah made a statement with regard to the meeting which is placed at **Annex-III**.

Agenda Item No. 2

ELECTION OF THE CHAIRMAN

4. H.E. Dr. Ahmet Tiktik, Undersecretary of State Planning Organization and the Head of the delegation of the Republic of Turkey was unanimously elected as the Chairman of the meeting.

Agenda Item No. 3

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

5. The Council adopted the following Agenda for its meeting:

1. Inauguration of the meeting.

a) Inaugural statement of the high dignitary from Turkey.

b) Statement of the Secretary General.

2. Election of the Chairman.

3. Adoption of the Agenda.

4. Statements by the heads of delegation.
5. Consideration of the report of the Secretary General on ECO activities for 2003.
6. Consideration of the new programmes and projects for 2004 in the following areas:
 - Trade and Investment;
 - Transport and Communications;
 - Energy, Minerals & Environment;
 - Agriculture, Industry & Health;
 - Project Research and Economic Research & Statistics;
 - i) Projects
 - ii) Finance and Economics
 - iii) Activities related to Economic Research & Statistics
 - Inter-Regional ECO Activities;
 - i) ECO Regional Institutions and Specialized Agencies
 - ii) Drug Control
 - iii) International relations
7. Annual ECO Calendar of Events for 2004-2005.
8. Any other business.
9. Date and venue of the next meeting.
10. Adoption of the report.
11. Vote of thanks.

Agenda Item No. 4

STATEMENTS BY THE HEADS OF DELEGATION

6. The heads of participating delegations made opening statements, outlining their policies and views on the projects/programmes and activities of the Organization. Copies of the statements made available to the Secretariat are placed at ***Annex-IV***.

Agenda Item No. 5

CONSIDERATION OF THE REPORT OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL ON ECO ACTIVITIES FOR 2003.

7. The Acting Secretary General of ECO presented his annual report to the Council on the activities of the Organization during 2003. The report had been circulated among the member states on November 12, 2003.

8. The Council appreciated the comprehensive report presented by the Acting Secretary General and took note of the useful observations and suggestions made therein.

Agenda Item No. 6

CONSIDERATION OF THE NEW PROGRAMMES AND PROJECTS FOR 2004

9. The Council discussed the proposals, programmes and projects included in the working papers of the Directorates of ECO Secretariat, including status report on the ECO Calendar of Events/Meetings for 2003-2004, outlining the progress achieved in the implementation of the activities approved by 13th COM meeting and made the recommendations given in the succeeding paras proposing future course of action and activities in 2004 and 2005.

10. The Council noted with appreciation the work of the Secretariat with regard to implementation of the decisions/ recommendations of RPCs and other high level ECO organs and the ongoing Programme/Projects/Activities and Calendar of Events/Meetings for the year 2003 in all sectors.

a) Trade and Investment

11. The Council expressed its satisfaction over the achievements made during the 2nd ECO Ministerial meeting on Commerce/Foreign Trade on July 17, 2003, in Islamabad. The Council welcomed the signing of ECO Trade Agreement (ECOTA) by the Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan, Islamic Republic of Iran, Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Republic of Tajikistan and Republic of Turkey and hoped that ECOTA would lead to a new era of increased trade and investment cooperation in the ECO region.

12. The Council requested those member states who could not sign the Agreement so far to consider the signing of ECO Trade Agreement at the earliest. The Council also emphasized to the signatory member countries to complete the ratification process for its early implementation. The Council welcomed the offer made by the Republic of Turkey to host the 3rd ECO Ministerial Meeting on Commerce/Foreign Trade within two years time.

13. The Council appreciated the task accomplished by HLEG on Tariff & Non-Tariff Barriers in the ECO region, which led to the finalization/signing of the ECO Trade Agreement. The Council welcomed the establishment of a new HLEG on Trade & Investment, the 1st meeting of which will be held in Ankara on January 13-15, 2004, to discuss the implementation of ECOTA, and other related matters. The Council requested the member states to confirm the participation of the senior officials of their governmental agencies/bodies who are fully authorized to negotiate on foreign trade, customs and investment promotion issues to enable the Secretariat, to arrange the meeting in a befitting manner.

14. The Council expressed its satisfaction over the progress made in implementation of the Joint ECO/ITC project on promoting Intra-Regional Trade and realization of the 2nd Buyers/Sellers Meeting on Food & Beverages held in Almaty on May 26-27, 2003. The Council asked the ECO Secretariat to organize the 2nd ECO Business Forum and 3rd Buyers/Sellers meeting for accelerating private sectors' participation in the ECO projects and having positive impact on ECO intra-regional trade.

15. The Council appreciated the efforts of ECO Secretariat for making contacts with ITC and UNDP for the finalization of the programme, provided that the necessary funds will be allocated by UNDP. It has also been agreed that the 3rd Buyers/Sellers Meeting on Pharmaceutical will be held in September 2004, in Istanbul. The Council also advised the ECO Secretariat to publicize the event well before holding the 3rd Buyers/Sellers meeting for more active participation.

16. The Council took note of the lack of active participation of ECO-CCI in the activities of ECO. The Council welcomed the offer made by the Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan to arrange the 7th meeting of the General Assembly of ECO-CCI, to take important decisions with regard to its permanent Secretariat, as well as to develop new mechanisms and modalities aimed at better and effective interaction between its member Chambers. The Council asked the Secretariat to communicate the proposal for the venue of the said meeting to the member states for consideration/decisions.

17. The Council while recognizing the importance of ECO Chambers as well as ECO Trade Fairs, appreciated the Islamic Republic of Pakistan's announcement to host the 4th ECO Trade Fair on February 20-26, 2004, in Karachi.

18. The Council thanked the Islamic Republic of Pakistan for hosting the 3rd meeting of the ECO Council of Heads of Customs Administrations (CHCA) on February 16-18, 2004 and in this respect asked the Secretariat to encourage the member states to send their views on the draft agreement on the establishment of Data Bank on Smuggling and Customs Offences prior to the meeting to the Secretariat for circulation.

19. The Council appreciated the technical assistance offers made by the Customs Authorities of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Turkey concerning the needs of Afghanistan Customs Administration and called upon the remaining member states to expedite the provision of technical assistance in this regard.

20. The Council welcomed the Islamic Republic of Pakistan's readiness to hold the 3rd Seminar on Trade & Investment Information Networking in the ECO region as soon as it comes with offer for new dates. The Council further emphasized the member states (except Pakistan, Turkey and Iran) to designate their National Focal Points on ECO Trade-Net and furnish regulations on trade, investment and business as well as information on financial services, major products, imports and exports statistics, free trade areas, investment opportunities, trade promotion organizations, and the website addresses of the related trade organizations.

21. The Council requested the Secretariat to convene an Experts Group meeting to review the obstacles in the implementation of the Agreement on Simplification of Visa Procedures for the Businessmen of the ECO member states. The Council further requested the member states to consider the recommendations of the 1st Business Forum for appropriate action in this regard and to facilitate the issuance of visa to ECO member countries' businessmen.

22. The Council welcomed the offer of the Republic of Turkey to organize Trilateral Interim Committee meeting on the Establishment of ECO Trade and Development Bank on March 15-16, 2004, in Turkey.

23. The Council also welcomed the offer of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to convene the Trilateral Interim Committee meeting on the Establishment of ECO Reinsurance Company on December 26-28, 2003, in Islamabad and advised the concerned member states to initiate necessary preparation as soon as possible.

24. The Council appreciated the offer of the Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan to host the 2nd ECO Regional Investment Conference on April 15-18, 2004, in Kabul. The Council requested the member states for implementation of the decisions taken during the 1st Regional Investment Conference held on February 17-18, 2003, on Kish Island, and to convey informative notes to the ECO Secretariat on their respective investment policies and also advised Afghanistan to submit feasible investment projects for the consideration of donor agencies.

25. The Council advised the ECO Secretariat to organize seminars/workshops in association with WTO, which will serve the exchange of views about their trade policies vis-à-vis present multilateral trade negotiations which might lead to a common position among the member states in this regard. The Council took note of the offer of Republic of Azerbaijan to organize one of these seminars/workshops in Baku, provided that necessary funding of the meeting will be secured.

b) Transport and Communications

26. The Council appreciated the efforts seriously pursued by the member states with regard to completion of infrastructure projects as envisaged in the Programme of Action for the ECO Decade of Transport and Communications (1998-2007). In this respect, the Council took note of the information given by the member states.

27. The Council emphasized that important missing links including Bam-Zahidan rail link be completed soonest possible to link the Pakistan Railways to the ECO rail network.

28. The Council took note of the request of the Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan for assistance to strengthen the efforts of the international community for establishing rail network in Afghanistan.

29. The Council recommended speedy implementation of the decisions of the Steering Committee meeting (Coordination Unit) held on September 7-8, 2003 in Istanbul. In this respect, the Council especially referred to the agreed decisions to remove physical and administrative barriers, determination of concessional and harmonized tariff structure, establishment of a Common Containers Pool, finalization of

the schedule of container trains, identification of focal points and settlement of payment problems on account of through cargo booking in the ECO region and beyond.

30. Further, the Council appreciated the draft agreement prepared by CJSC “NC KTZ” with regard to mechanism of establishment and operation of the Common Empty Containers Pool (CCP) along with payment structure. The member states were requested to study the proposed Draft Agreement and inform the Secretariat by the end of February 2004 about their comments to ensure immediate operation of CCP.

31. The Council also requested the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Republic of Turkmenistan to participate in all activities connected with the Container Train project to resolve the remaining as well as the potential technical, physical, institutional and procedural hurdles. In this context, the Council asked for full implementation of the recommendations of the 7th meeting of the Heads of ECO Railway Authorities held in Dushanbe on December 23-25, 2002.

32. The Council called for an early completion of the procedural and technical formalities to launch the regular passenger train on Almaty-Tashkant-Turkmenabad-Istanbul route. In this respect, it made a special request to the Government of Uzbekistan to redeem the firm commitments given by its highest authority on the eve of the 7th ECO Summit, 12th and 13th COMs to make arrangements to allow the said train transit through its territory, especially following the removal of the technical and security related impediments as confirmed by a team of experts from Iran and Kazakhstan who undertook a technical inspection in Mashad early 2003.

33. The Council recalled the measures adopted by the ECO Railway Authorities to promote an ECO-wide Tariff Policy and asked for convening of the meeting of the Heads of ECO Railway Authorities for adoption of the agreed MoU prior to its implementation. Also, the Council called upon the member states to identify a coordinating member state who may monitor the harmonization of the ECO Common Tariff Policy in all member states within the framework of OSJD Agreement on International Freight Traffic (SMGS 1990), the Provisions of the International Transit Tariff (MTT) and the TTFA and its Annexures, on yearly basis.

34. The Council appreciated the offer of the relevant authorities of the Republic of Turkey to agree to host the 8th meeting of the Heads of ECO Railway Authorities in June/July 2004.

35. The Council took note of the Iranian Railway Authorities’ efforts to publish the second edition of ECO Railway Network Map and requested the relevant Iranian authorities to send to the Secretariat blue prints of the revised version prepared in accordance with the views and comments of the member states without delay for circulation.

36. The Council highlighted the need to remove the existing physical obstacles in the field of road transport within the ECO region in the light of the decisions of the 4th

Ministerial meeting on Transport and Communications held in Izmir on September 26-27, 2002. In this respect, the Council called for an early examination of the Turkish proposals regarding a) Multilateral Permits and b) Draft MoU on Facilitation and Harmonization of International Road Transport of Goods by establishing a High Level Working Group.

37. The Council requested the Islamic Republic of Iran to circulate the blueprint of the second edition of the Road Network Map, taking into account the suggestions and proposals of the member states latest by March 20, 2004. In this respect, the member states were asked to convey their comments by end February 2004 after which no objections would be entertained. The Islamic Republic of Iran requested the member states to convey classification of the roads for reflection in the proposed maps. The Council further agreed that to the purpose of finalizing the maps a high level experts meeting could be convened on self-financing basis at the ECO Secretariat to resolve all technical and substantive objections/differences. The offer of Some member states to make available electronic versions of booklets/directories already published by them on road related traffic to the Secretariat for circulation through the ECO website was greatly appreciated.

38. The Council asked the member states to actively participate in the 1st meeting of the heads of Central Insurance authorities in ECO member countries to discuss the draft prepared by the Islamic Republic of Iran without any further delay as no system of transit trade, including TTFA, would be completed without a credible Common Insurance Policy covering transshipments and third party liability.

39. The Council requested the relevant authorities of the Republic of Turkey to prepare the draft format of Directory on ECO Road Network and in this respect requested the member states, especially Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan to provide the requisite information via Secretariat to the relevant authorities in the Republic of Turkey. The Turkish authorities informed that it would be more advisable to publish the proposed Directory after finalization of the ECO Road Network Maps.

40. The Council appreciated the ECO use of the UNESCAP database and suggested establishment of a similar ECO facility on all modes of transportation available in the region. In this respect, the member states were requested to provide the requisite relevant information to the ECO Secretariat by July 30, 2004.

41. The Council discussed the affairs of the ECO Shipping Company and expressed the hope that the concerned member states would pay due attention to activate it.

42. The Council noted with satisfaction the scheduling of the Heads of Reference Marine Organizations meeting on October 13-16, 2003 in Tehran and called for implementation of its recommendations. The Council appreciated the offer of the Republic of Turkey to hold the 2nd meeting of the Heads of Reference Marine Organizations in June 2004 in Istanbul.

43. The Council requested the Civil Aviation Authorities of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and the Republic of Turkey to furnish their versions of the Draft Framework Agreement on Cooperation in the field of Air Transport in accordance with the recommendations of the 1st meeting of the Heads of the Civil Aviation held on February 12-14, 2001 in Karachi.

44. The Council further requested that the member states while finalizing the proposed consolidated Framework Agreement must take into account the privatization programmes underway in the Civil Aviation field and ,therefore, should confine them to control security issues as well as regulations concerning the use of air space etc. rather than addressing commercial operations by Airlines set up in public and private sector.

45. The Council noted with satisfaction the improvement in the operational capability of TAEFOS in the region. The Islamic Republic of Iran informed the measures taken by it to lay fibre optical cable from Zahidan to Pakistan border so as to provide a distortion route for more reliable connection. The Council expressed the hope that Peshawar-Kabul and Herat would be connected by fiber optical cable with the Islamic Republics of Iran and Pakistan in due course. The Council welcomed the offer of the Republic of Azerbaijan to hold the 4th Experts Working Group meeting of TAEFOS in Baku in January/February 2004.

46. The Council called upon the member states to activate the institution of the meetings of the Directors General of National Telecommunications Companies and Postal Authorities of the ECO member states which has remained dormant for the past two years. In this connection, the Council also asked the member states to consider the Pakistan's proposal to form a small group of experts to visit training facilities available in the region and shortlist one training facility to be designated as the ECO Training Institute after its due up-gradation.

47. The Council requested Afghanistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan to specify focal points for the National Inter-Ministerial Committee on Border-Crossing Facilitation and Promotion of International Transport and convey their particulars to the ECO Secretariat at the earliest.

48. The Council in view of the multiple problems confronting the movement at common border points within the region agreed in principle with the Secretariat's proposal to launch studies of the facilities available at all national border points against payment from the ECO Feasibility Fund. TORs for such studies will be approved by CPR. The Council requested the Secretariat to circulate the UNDP-ECO consultant's report on the inspection of border facilities and subjected its approval for launching the proposed studies to the review outcome of the UNDP-ECO consultancies.

49. The Council called for speedy ratification of TTFA and its Annexures by the member states (excepting Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan and Tajikistan). Furthermore, the Council appreciated the study undertaken by the UNDP

Consultant highlighting the inadequacies inherent in TTFA and recommendations how to remove the same and invited the member states to send their comments on the study to the Secretariat when circulated.

50. The Council urged the relevant authorities in the member states to complete the requisite formalities at national level necessary for accession to the remaining international conventions listed in the Programme of Action for the ECO Decade of Transport and Communications as early as possible. The Council appreciated the growing trend for accession to the Conventions.

51. The Council agreed to hold the High Level Experts meeting of ICT prior to the scheduling of the 1st Ministerial meeting on ICT. In this respect, it appreciated the offer of the Islamic Republic of Iran to hold the meeting on 1st April 2004. The outcome of this High Level Experts Group meeting will form part of the agenda for ICT Ministerial meeting to be held later. The new dates for the Ministerial meeting would be determined through diplomatic channels.

52. The Council while highlighting the need for Common Railway Information System for reconciliation of data transmission technology and compatibility of hardware and software requested the member states to officially introduce their experts to the Working Group constituted for this purpose at the earliest. The Council also emphasized that the deadlines contained in the Action Plans needed to be revised and sent to the Secretariat for circulation.

53. The UN Ministerial meeting on landlocked countries was held in Almaty in August 2003 and adopted the Almaty Action Plan keeping in view of the special needs of the landlocked countries for access to the global markets. The Council requested the Secretariat to monitor the follow up of the Almaty Action Plan with a view to facilitating the transit arrangements from transit developing countries to ECO landlocked countries and vice versa.

54. While recalling the decisions of the 4th Ministerial meeting on Transport and Communications, the Council took note of the proposal of the Secretariat to postpone action with regard to establishment of Permanent Commission on Transport and Communications till the completion of the ECO Decade of Transport and Communications and deemed it appropriate to refer it to the next Ministerial meeting on Transport in the Kyrgyz Republic in 2004.

55. The Council appreciated the smooth implementation of the ECO/IDB/ESCAP/UNCTAD Multimodal study and endorsed the Secretariat's proposal to complete the project even if it involved financial support from ECO sources for the down- stream activities involving regional and national workshops on MTO (Multimodal Transport Operations).

c) Energy, Minerals and Environment

c-1 Energy

56. The Council emphasized the need to continue the implementation of the outcome of the 1st ECO Ministerial meeting on Energy /Petroleum and welcomed the offer of the Islamic Republic of Iran to host the 2nd ECO Ministerial meeting on Energy/Petroleum during the year 2004/2005. In this respect, the Council reiterated its request to the relevant authorities in the member states to provide their utmost cooperation for its successful convening.

57. The Council took note of the new development with regard to selection of a consultant for the pre-feasibility study on the interconnection and parallel functioning of ECO countries power systems and hoped that the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) would soon finalize the process of selection for appointment of the said consultant and convey the same to the ECO Secretariat.

58. The Council took note of the outcome of the Second Training Programme on Energy Efficiency and Conservation conducted on October 7-17, 2003 by the Turkish authorities under the auspices of their National Energy Conservation Center (NECC) with the cooperation of Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and welcomed the offer made by Turkey to organize a similar event in 2004.

59. The Council recalled the offer made by the Islamic Republic of Pakistan during 12th RPC meeting to host the 2nd Workshop on Energy Conservation and Efficiency in Islamabad and requested the relevant authorities in Pakistan to arrange for convening of the subject event in the course of the year 2004.

60. While noting the importance of Regional Power Trade Strategy, the Council emphasized the need for further cooperation with ADB, IDB, World Bank and other international financial institutions and organizations for the development and implementation of activities in this field.

61. The Council appreciated the collaboration of the ECO Secretariat with the Energy Charter Secretariat (ECS) regarding the possibility of organizing joint ECO-ECS seminar/workshop during year 2004/2005 and requested the Secretariat to continue the contacts with ECS at working level in order to determine possible dates and other technical arrangements for the said event.

62. Noting the importance of cooperation on New and Renewable Sources of Energy, the Council welcomed the convening of a workshop on this subject in Turkey on April 28-29, 2004.

63. The Council recommended the member states to inform each other about their major project accomplishments in the field of energy.

64. Considering the fact the ECO region is endowed with rich resources of energy as well as large consuming areas the Council took note of the proposal for an event to be designed for cooperation and dialogue among the member states on this subject.

c-2 Minerals

65. Acknowledging the importance of attracting the foreign investment in the mineral sector, the Council took note with appreciation of the outcome of the ECO Mineral Experts Group Meeting on legal and fiscal regimes for promotion of Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) in the mineral sector held on 29-30 June 2003 at the ECO Secretariat, organized jointly with the Directorate of Trade and Investment of ECO Secretariat, with the financial assistance of the Islamic Development Bank together with the Plan of Action for promotion of Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) in ECO region mineral sector developed by that meeting.

66. The Council took note with appreciation of the Report of the 2nd ECO Mineral Experts Group meeting held in Ankara on October 20-22, 2003 and requested the relevant authorities in the member states to finalize the submission of the required data for compilation of ECO Mineral Data Booklet (MDB) at the earliest, in order to arrange the publishing of the first version of MDB earlier of the year 2004. Upon submission of the Data Booklet, a team of experts from member states would analyse the data for identifying the potential, areas and ways for mining cooperation.

67. The Council considered another proposal of the aforesaid meeting regarding the compilation of Metallogenic Map of ECO region, and appreciated the readiness of the Islamic Republic of Iran to prepare such a Map upon receiving the necessary data. In this respect the Council requested the member states to submit their views on the preparation of a metallogenic map and related format to the ECO Secretariat so if all agreed then the member countries will start collecting the necessary data and send them to the ECO Secretariat through official channels.

68. With reference to the paragraph 59 of the report of 13th RPC meeting regarding the establishment of an on-line dynamic and multipurpose ECO Mineral Data Bank. Iranian delegation circulated a document on the project to the member countries during the 2nd Mineral Experts Group meeting. Member countries were asked to submit their consideration and views on the matter to the ECO Secretariat by the end of March 2004. While doing that ECO Secretariat could explore the possibilities of financial support of the donors in this respect.

c-3 Environment

69. The Council emphasized the need to continue the support of the relevant authorities in the member states for implementation of the outcome of the First ECO Ministerial meeting on Environment.

70. The Council requested the 1st meeting of the Working Group on Environment to be held in Ankara on April 7-8, 2004, without any further delay to explore ways and means for implementing the above-mentioned Plan of Action and suggest modifications. The Council advised that the outcome of the 1st meeting of the Working Group on Environment be considered and endorsed by the 2nd ECO Ministerial meeting on Environment to be held in Turkey in 2004.

71. Referring to paras 64 and 65 of the report of the 13th RPC meeting the Council requested the Secretariat to continue pursuing the matter of finalizing of the text of MOUs with the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) and World Meteorology Organization (WMO) and their signing, after the consideration by the CPR.

d) Agriculture, Industry and Health

d-1 Agriculture

72. Taking into consideration serious food security problems in the ECO region which need urgent attention, the Council noted with satisfaction the launching of the implementation of the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) Technical Cooperation Program (TCP) to support ECO for preparation of a Regional Program for Food Security (RPFS). The Council expressed its thanks to FAO for its continuous support for ECO's food security endeavors.

73. The Council appreciated the active participation of the ECO Secretariat in IDB-FAO High-Level Technical Workshop (HLTW) on "Regional Programme for Food Security in Near East", held on 8-9 October 2003 in Jeddah. The Council expressed its thanks to the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) for its generous attention to food security problems in the region.

74. The Council appreciated the holding of the Policy Analysis Workshop on Food Security for National Focal Points and Consultants of the ECO member states in the field of Food Security on October 20-24, 2003, in Almaty, Republic of Kazakhstan, as the first major activity within the TCP project.

75. The Council, noting that one of the most important objectives of TCP is the preparation of selected bankable projects at national, sub-regional and regional levels for donors' consideration, requested the member countries to formulate feasible, high return projects at national level with necessary background information and to convey them to the Secretariat along with their proposals for regional cooperation in the field of food security to be presented to various donors including Islamic Development Bank.

76. The Council, highlighting the importance of the efficient follow-up of the decisions of the 1st ECO Ministerial meeting on Agriculture and preparations for the 2nd Ministerial meeting on Agriculture, appreciated the offer of the Islamic Republic of Iran to host the senior officials meeting on Agriculture end of July 2004. The Council requested the Islamic Republic of Iran to announce the exact dates for the meeting and other details and urged the member states to participate in this meeting at the highest possible level.

77. The Council welcomed the offer of the Republic of Turkey to host the 2nd ECO Ministerial meeting on Agriculture in the last quarter of 2004 and requested the member states to confirm their participation in this meeting at Ministerial level.

78. The Council recalled that during the Ministerial meeting on Agriculture held in Islamabad in July 2002 priorities were specified, and coordinator countries were

assigned in drought management (Iran); water management (Pakistan); trade promotion (Turkey); development of post-harvest and processing industry (Turkey). Taking into consideration that the 2nd ECO Ministerial meeting on Agriculture would also consider the progress in these fields, the Council requested the coordinator countries to urgently launch cooperation in these fields. The Council also requested the coordinator countries to prepare specific programmes and plans of actions in their respective field of responsibilities.

79. The Council appreciated the offer of the Islamic Republic of Iran, as the coordinator country for drought management, to host a workshop on the subject to be held from December 21-23, 2003 in Tehran and requested other member states to actively participate in this meeting.

80. The Council appreciated the offer of the Republic of Turkey as the coordinator country for development of post harvest and processing industry to host a workshop on prevention of crop losses at post harvest stages in September/October, 2004 and requested the member states to actively participate in this meeting.

81. The Council also appreciated the offer of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, as the coordinator country for water management, to organize the workshop on the subject in 2004 and requested the member states to actively participate in the Workshop.

82. The Council, noting that some member countries have already communicated their views and proposals for consideration during the events mentioned above, requested other member countries to convey to the Secretariat their proposals in this regard at the earliest. The Council however requested the member countries to send their country reports in these priority areas to the Secretariat well in advance of workshops for circulation among the members.

83. The Council also advised the relevant coordinator countries to approach the FAO for its possible financial and technical contribution to the workshops and cooperation activities in their respective fields of responsibility and requested the Secretariat to support the member states' initiatives in this regard.

84. Recalling the decision of the 13th RPC regarding the organization of the 1st meeting of the Heads of the Veterinary Organizations of the ECO member states which is scheduled to be held on March 6-8, 2004, in Tehran, the Council requested the host authorities to convey to the Secretariat the detailed information regarding the arrangements for holding this meeting and urged other member states to actively participate in this meeting. The meeting will also consider the establishment of a permanent commission for prevention and control of livestock diseases in the region and other measures to be taken to control cross-border animal diseases and establishment of central units, i.e. laboratory and buffer zones in the border areas of the Member States.

85. The Council agreed with the proposal of the Republic of Turkey as to the development and preparation of the format to be prepared by the Secretariat for the country reports to be submitted to the Heads of Veterinary Organization's meeting. This format will be sent to the member countries under cover of a note of the Secretariat with a specified deadline for its submission to the Secretariat.

86. Cognizant of the importance of WTO regime on agriculture and the increasing role of developing countries in the global agricultural trade, and considering the significance of the exchange of information and experiences between those member states who are already members of WTO and the others (non-members of WTO), the Council welcomed the offers of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and the Republic of Turkey to organize training workshops on WTO agreement in agriculture for the relevant experts of the other member states.

87. Recalling the decision of the 1st ECO Ministerial meeting on Agriculture regarding the establishment of institutional cooperation with relevant international organization, the Council asked the member States other than Turkey to send the contact information of their Ambassadors/Permanent Representatives in the international organizations like FAO, ESCAP, IDB, ADB, World Meteorological Organization (WMO) etc. where agriculture related issues are discussed, to the ECO Secretariat to follow up and secure technical and financial assistance for ECO's joint activities with these organizations.

88. The Council advised that training courses / academic programmes may be organized for the ECO countries in the field of agriculture and participants from ECO countries may also be invited to existing courses or programmes of the member countries in these fields with the aim of capacity building and facilitating the establishment of permanent contacts among the experts in these fields.

89. The Council also appreciated the idea of the circulation of contact information of Member countries' agricultural research institutions and requested the member countries who have not yet done so, to circulate the requisite information at the earliest.

90. The Council took note of the Iranian delegation's comments regarding the importance of extension services for the development of agriculture sector. The Iranian delegation specifically mentioned the organization of workshops and providing extension services in different subjects such as plant protection, seed control and water harvesting.

91. The Council called upon the member states to nominate their representatives for the Mission to identify short/medium/long-term areas of assistance in agriculture for Afghanistan for the consideration of donors and convey their views about the Terms of References and objectives of this Mission. The Council also noted that Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan will convey to the Secretariat its needs and priorities in the field of Agriculture.

d-2 Industry

92. The Council, while emphasizing the importance of programs, projects and cooperation in the field of industry, acknowledged with appreciation the preparations made by the Ministry of Industries and Mines of the Islamic Republic of Iran for holding the 1st ECO Ministerial meeting on Industry on January 25-27, 2004 in Tehran. The Ministerial meeting will identify priority areas of cooperation for ECO countries in the field of industry. The Council also appreciated the efforts for the preparation of a draft ECO Long Term Strategy/Plan of Action in the field of Industry. The Iranian side underlined the participation of the senior experts along with the Ministers from the member countries to the 1st Ministerial meeting on Industry.

93. Considering the importance of the 1st ECO Ministerial meeting on Industry, the Council urged the member states to ensure their participation in the meeting at the highest level and convey to the Secretariat urgently their country reports on industrial potentials, needs, programmes/strategies, inputs for regional strategy on industry and proposals for inclusion in the agenda of the meeting.

94. Considering the important role of Small & Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in economic development of the countries, the Council welcomed the offer of the Republic of Turkey to organize the Workshop on SMEs in November 2004 in Turkey. The Council also requested the member states to actively participate in the workshop and send to the Secretariat the updated information about their SME development strategies and programmes for circulation among the members.

95. The Council took note of the views and comments of the Republic of Turkey that the cooperation on SMEs should continue through exchange of documents, publications, establishment of network, participation to fairs, business visits etc. Turkish delegation also underlined the importance of the organization of workshops in specific sub-sectors such as cooperation among handicrafts producing SMEs.

96. While stressing the significance of agro-related metal working industries in development of Agriculture sector of the region, the Council requested the Islamic Republic of Iran to intimate the exact dates and other details about the convening of the workshop on the subject which will be organized with technical/financial contributions of UNIDO. The Council also requested the member states to inform the Secretariat about their potentials, needs/requirements and proposals for cooperation in the field of agro-related metal working industries prior to the meeting.

97. The Council took note of the willingness and readiness of the Islamic Republic of Iran for extending training and research in the industrial sector to all ECO member states and requested member states to convey to the Secretariat their needs in this regard.

98. The Council welcomed the offer of the Islamic Republic of Iran to host an Experts Group meeting on privatization and private sector development in July 2004.

The Council advised the Secretariat to circulate the offers of other member countries if any for organizing the same meeting.

d-3 Health

99. The Council discussed ECO's activities in health sector and agreed with the proposal of the Secretariat to organize a meeting of Heads of Red Crescent Organizations of the member states in a way that it enhances cooperation among these organizations and in enhancing the preparedness of the member countries in the times of disaster. The Council took note of the offer of the Islamic Republic of Iran to host this meeting in April-July 2004 and requested the member countries to consult with their relevant authorities and to submit their own offer, if any. The Council requested the member states to convey to the Secretariat their proposals/recommendations to be included in the agenda of the aforementioned meeting.

100. The Council acknowledged the successful organization of the Roundtable meeting on HIV/AIDS and Young People organized by the Secretariat and the Kyrgyz authorities in collaboration with the UNFPA in Issyk-Kul Lake, Kyrgyz Republic in June 2003 with the participation of 65 representatives from parliaments, youth associations, NGOs of member states and relevant international organizations and recommended to convene a second roundtable on the subject.

101. The Council also requested the Secretariat to approach OPEC Fund and other possible donors for their possible financial support to the Second Roundtable meeting and other HIV/AIDS prevention activities in the ECO Region.

102. The Council took note of the Iranian delegation's proposal for cooperation in the field of traditional herbal drugs and pharmaceuticals among the member countries.

d-4 Tourism

103. While emphasizing the importance of the tourism sector in contributing to the national economies of the member countries, the Council appreciated the willingness of the Islamic Republic of Iran to host the 3rd ECO Expert Group meeting on Tourism in 2004 in Iran which will review the long-term perspectives and consider the preparation of Draft Plan of Action in the field of tourism. The Council also reiterated its earlier decision to involve private sector particularly tour operators in this important meeting.

d-5 Human Resource Development

104. Keeping in view the decision of the 12th Council of Ministers (Istanbul Declaration 2002), the Council recommended the activation of human resource development sector and requested the member states to identify their priorities and provide the Secretariat with their country reports on human resource development and poverty alleviation. The Council also called upon the member countries to benefit from the existing training facilities of ECO countries in human resource development in various fields.

e) Project Research

105. The Council appreciated the preparation of the Plan of Action for ECO's participation in reconstruction of Afghanistan. In accordance with the provisions of the Plan, the Council urged the member states to hold the Financial Experts meeting in Tehran to finalize the financial modalities for establishment and subsequent operation of the ECO Special Fund for reconstruction of Afghanistan.

106. The Council supported the two pre-feasibility studies in respect of Rehabilitation/construction of bridges in Nangarhar Province, Afghanistan and Electrical Distribution Network of Pol-i-Alam Centre of Loger Province, Afghanistan which enjoy the national priority of Afghanistan for approval of utilizing the ECO Feasibility Fund.

107. The Council, in accordance with the provisions of the Plan, also asked the Secretariat and the Government of the Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan to identify/select projects (other than feasibility studies) on case-by-case basis in sectors such as transport & communications, energy, power supply, sewerage, health as well as training of Afghan officials to be implemented through the ECO Feasibility Fund with the decision of CPR.

108. The Council discussed the updated compilation of the list of ECO projects including those requiring feasibility study in 2004 from the member states and evaluation of such projects as high, medium and low and asked the Secretariat to follow up the future course of action identified by the member states in respect of each project. The Council requested the member states to provide more details so that some projects profiles be prepared for submission to international donors.

109. The Council expressed its thanks to UNDP for providing funds for implementation of the ECO-UNDP programme in two phases including the Capacity Building Project of ECO Secretariat in 2001-2003 and agreed that the Secretariat may take new initiatives for seeking technical and financial support of UNDP for studying ECOTA and some consultancies in the field of transport. The Council asked the Secretariat to circulate a consolidated report on the implementation of the project.

110. The Council thanked the ECO-CEC for hosting the 2nd Conference on the role of ECO-CEC in the development of ECO member states held on October 14-16, 2003, in Ankara, and asked the member states to participate in the third conference to be hosted by Iran in Tehran in 2004 with the cooperation of the Secretariat. The Council appreciated that the aforesaid pre-feasibility studies for reconstruction of Afghanistan was recommended to be undertaken by ECO-CEC.

111. The Council noted that ECO-CEC comprises companies from Iran, Pakistan and Turkey and called upon the remaining member states to urge their business companies to participate in ECO-CEC as partners. The Council recommended that ECO-CEC may be considered by the member states for the status of ECO specialized body.

112. The Council, keeping in view the amount accumulated in the ECO Feasibility Fund, asked the member states as well as the ECO Directorates to propose studies for ECO projects in priority areas to be financed by the ECO Feasibility Fund.

113. The Council appreciated the publication of Directory of training and research institutions and the Roster of leading experts and consultants from the member states. The Council asked the member states who have not conveyed the information to the Secretariat with regard to both the publications to do so and requested the Secretariat to update the information for circulation among the member states by the end of April 2004.

114. The Council welcomed the offer of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to host the 1st ECO Ministerial meeting on Finance/Economics on January 28 - 30, 2004. The Council asked the Secretariat to prepare the agenda of the meeting incorporating the views of the member states connected therewith and make other necessary preparations in cooperation with the host country and inform the member states accordingly.

115. The Council also agreed that the staff of the Directorate could undertake visits, if necessary, to Planning Organizations of the member states to promote priority projects and feasibility studies. Moreover, arrangements of the training facilities to the ECO staff could be explored in consultation with the relevant authorities of the member states.

f) Economic Research & Statistics

116. The Council noted with appreciation the Secretariat's efforts to summarize macro-economic overview of the ECO region as part of the working paper and expressed the hope that the same pattern would be followed in future.

117. The Council agreed to urge the recruitment of independent professional consultants on short duration basis out of the sources of ECO as provided in the basic documents to suggest measures in his area to make the Directorate of Economic Research and Statistics work more effective. In this respect, those member states who did not offer to extend the requisite technical assistance, were requested to do so.

118. The Council took note of the Secretariat's proposal to focus on doable projects, keeping in view the importance of credible and comparable statistical data for planning purposes. Also, the Council agreed to recommend to the member states to pay more attention to the hosting of activities related to the mandate of this Directorate.

119. The Council noted the offer of the Secretariat that due to the non-readiness of the member states to hold the 6th meeting of the NFPs, the same could be arranged at the Secretariat on self-financing basis. Nevertheless, the member states were requested to continue their efforts to persuade the relevant authorities to hold the meeting with local hospitality as the experience of self-financing had failed to lead to the scheduling of this activity in the past.

120. The Council asked the Secretariat to promote intra-regional contact between the relevant economic and research centers.

121. The Council called for an early publication of ECO Statistical Yearbook as well as compilation of ECO Annual Economic Reports and ECO Business Guide Book. In this regard, the Council requested the member states to provide the requisite material without any further delay to the Secretariat. The Council agreed on the need to set a specific date for preparation of the first ECO Statistical Yearbook and observed that in the absence of reliable national statistics in respect of the 10 countries, the factors which withheld the publication of the Statistical Yearbook could be resolved by publishing separate country-wise statistic year-book and the first such book can be published by end of March 2004.

122. The Council noted the significance of measuring the non-observed economy in the ECO region and appreciated the offer of the Secretariat to promote organization of a regional workshop on the subject.

123. The Council welcomed the proposal of the Republic of Azerbaijan to host the informal meeting of the Heads of the national Economic Research Institutes of the ECO member states in Baku, tentatively in the first quarter of 2004 to consider the ways to further increase the efficiency and effectiveness of cooperation in the field of economic research and statistics. Also, the Council noted the presentation by the Representative of the Republic of Azerbaijan on the proposed Centre on Economic Research and Statistics.

124. The Council agreed to consider thematic topics for discussion at the RPC sessions and in this respect accepted the Iranian initiative of discussing ECO cooperation for development in the era of globalization by the 15th RPC.

g) Inter-Regional ECO Activities

i) ECO Regional Institutions and Specialized Agencies

125. The Council was informed about the developments regarding the ECO Regional Institutions and ECO Specialized Agencies by the Secretariat, emphasizing their importance in their respective fields of activities. The Council expressed the hope that the formalities, which had not been completed as yet, may be completed without further delay so that the said Institutions and Agencies could become operational.

126. The Council reiterated its earlier calls to the member states that who had not yet ratified the ECO Cultural Institute (ECI) Charter to do so and invited the two non-signatory member states namely the Kyrgyz Republic and the Republic of Uzbekistan to consider acceding to the ECI Charter. Meanwhile, the signatory member states were expected to participate fully in the meetings and activities of the Institute. The Institute was also advised to encourage participation of all the member states. The contributing

member states, who have not done so, were requested to take appropriate steps to pay the budgetary contributions approved by CPR.

127. While appreciating the activities of the ECO Cultural Institute, the Council took note of the status report prepared by ECI which is placed at **Annex-V**. The member states were requested to lend support to various initiatives taken by the Institute.

128. The Council was apprised of the present status of the ECO Science Foundation, which could not be operationalized until now. The Council urged the member states to expedite their views on the ECO Science Foundation Charter as modified by Pakistan in the light of the Secretariat's comparative study and circulated among the member states so as to enable Pakistan to convene the first meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Foundation on March 25-26, 2004.

129. The Council urged all the signatory member states, except the Islamic Republic of Iran, Kyrgyz Republic and Republic of Tajikistan, for expeditious completion of ratification formalities with respect to the Charter of the ECO Educational Institute so that the Institute could become operational at the earliest. The representatives of the Republic of Turkey informed that the relevant Turkish authorities were also considering the issue of holding the 1st meeting of the Board of Trustees in the first half of 2004.

130. The Council, while appreciating the engagement of the Representative of ECO College of Insurance with the Council of Permanent Representatives in order to involve ECO member states in the affairs of the College, expressed the hope that the member states would enhance their participation in the activities of the College.

ii) Drug Control

131. The Council welcomed the launching of the second phase of the Joint ECO/UNODC Project in December 2002 with the recruitment of staff for Drug Control Coordination Unit. It appreciated the convening of the first meeting of its focal points in Tehran, the provision of computer equipments to focal points in member states and as well as launching of Virtual Private Network and training of focal points in its use. It encouraged the Unit to increase the pace of implementation of its work plan.

132. The Council requested all the member states to (a) continue communicating drug-related information to DCCU in the ECO Secretariat for its publishing at <http://www.ecodccu.org> and (b) actively participate in all ECO/UNODC project/events, which are included in the Calendar of Events for the year 2003-4 and approved by the meeting of Focal Points of DCCU. The Council suggested that member states may invite the ECO Secretariat, in relevant international or regional meetings on drug control matters.

133. The Council recommended to the ECO Secretariat, as envisaged in the joint ECO/UNODC project, to interact with the other international drug control organizations and share information on measures taken in combating illicit drug production and trafficking in the ECO member states.

134. The Council took note with appreciation of the offer of the Tehran Regional Training Centre for Anti-Narcotics and Turkish International Academy for Combating Drugs and Organized Crimes (TADOC) to organize with the technical assistance of the ECO Secretariat anti-narcotics workshops and training for the ECO member states. In this regard, the Council asked the two sides to organize such activities within the framework of the calendar of events of DCCU in coordination with the ECO Secretariat.

iii) International Relations

135. The Council appreciated the efforts of the Secretariat to promote relations with international/regional organizations and UN bodies and expressed the hope that the momentum would be maintained in the coming years. The Council further took note that this would serve the twin purposes of creating international awareness of the work and achievements of ECO as well as ensure the possibility of seeking technical and financial assistance from international donor agencies. In this regard, the Council noted the expanding relations of ECO with UNDP, UNCTAD, UNESCAP, WTO, WCO, Colombo Plan, UNECE, WMO, FAO, UNEP, OPEC, Energy Charter Treaty etc.

136. The Council called on ECO Secretariat to assess the earlier signed MoUs and the Agreements with different international/regional organizations and UN bodies on the basis of cost/benefit analysis and present a comprehensive report to CPR.

137. The Council urged the Secretariat to adopt a project-oriented policy for all its future activities in the international scene. In this respect, the Council asked the Secretariat to provide a definite ECO plan of action for expanding and pursuing its external relations with regional and international organizations to the ECO decision-making bodies for consideration and approval.

Agenda Item No.7

ANNUAL ECO CALENDAR OF EVENTS/MEETINGS FOR 2004-2005

138. The Council considered the draft ECO Calendar of Events and Meetings for 2004 and 2005 in various sectors a copy of which is placed at **Annex-VI**.

Agenda Item No. 8

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

139. No issue was raised under this agenda item.

Agenda Item No.9

DATE AND VENUE OF THE NEXT MEETING

140. The Council advised the Secretariat to work out the venue and dates for the 15th RPC through diplomatic channels.

Agenda Item No. 10
ADOPTION OF THE REPORT

141. The report of the 14th meeting of the Regional Planning Council (RPC) was adopted unanimously.

Agenda Item No. 11
VOTE OF THANKS

142. On behalf of all the participating delegations, the Council expressed its deep appreciation and thanks to the Government of the Republic of Turkey for the gracious hospitality extended to them. The Council also appreciated the positive and invaluable contributions of the Acting Secretary General Mr. Sanallah to ECO and wished him well for his new assignment.

143. The Council concluded with a vote of thanks to the Chair for conducting the deliberations of the meeting in a smooth and efficient manner. The Council also appreciated the efforts made by the Acting Secretary General and his able staff for preparing comprehensive Working Papers and other documents, facilitating the work of the Council.